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XI.—*Frontiers of China towards Birmah.* By DR. GUTZLAFF.
(Communicated by Sir George Staunton.)

[Read December 11, 1848.]

THE south-west of Yunnan received its civilization simultaneously with the remaining northern Laos states. Amongst the aborigines there existed a certain community of interests which kept their northern enemies long at bay. Mention is made of their early kings, of battles fought, and of conquests obtained, a few traces of which may be found in the Laos legends. The dominion of their kings during the great troubles in China, until the Tang princes reduced the empire to order, comprised at one time the greater part of Yunnan, and enabled their ruler to carry his arms into Tunkin.

The subjects of the southern potentate consisted partly of Chinese, but the greater number were of Laos extraction.

Until the destruction of the Sung family the natives retained their independence. Before, however, the last scion of that race lost his life, the mighty conqueror Kublai swept through Yunnan, and on the Bamoo road traversed the frontiers in 1272. Marco Polo appears to have been in the train of this prince, and is the only European who, from personal knowledge, has written upon the topography of this unknown country.

Though the inhabitants for a while were kept in awe, and even prevailed upon to send small presents of gold from their mountains to the Mongul camp, they soon learned to despise an enemy whose numbers were gradually being thinned under the effects of a destructive climate. To the Ming princes they sent but a nominal tribute, and, like their brethren in the East, requested that their hereditary chiefs should be confirmed by the Chinese authorities. Although considered as incorporated with China, they retain their own laws, and a Chinese officer is seldom seen within their territory.

We left off in our description of the free Laos states at the south-western extremity, where the Leën river flows, and shall now proceed due north along the borders of Koshanpri and of Birmah.

From the Man-loo river to the Lan-tsang (a considerable rapid stream, that falls into the Kew-lung farther south) there extends a very wild region for about 60 miles, intersected by the Lung-keang or Dragon river. Stupendous mountains covered with eternal snow extend here from east to west. Some of the valleys are difficult of access even to the hardy mountaineers themselves, who, with the agility of the chamois, leap from rock to rock, unmindful of the precipices below

them. The population is scanty, and the more remote tribes live in a savage state; but along the valleys of the above rivers the population becomes more dense. The communities are, however, so small, and obey so many masters, that the tract has yet received no general name. The climate is too subject to sudden changes and too rigorous to encourage here the production of many plants; medicinal herbs are however abundant, and wild animals of every description are frequent.

Quite different is the state of the territory included between the Lan-tsang river to the west, and the Nan-ting to the east. This whole tract constitutes one large fertile valley, where a dense and wealthy agricultural population covers the well irrigated soil. The Ting principality is small, whilst the Käng-ma, one of the largest governed by the Laos chiefs, extends far to the east. The inhabitants are orderly, emulating the Chinese in their industry and the care with which they cultivate their fields.

Scarcely, however, is the Nan-ting passed, when nature again appears in all the wildness of mountain scenery. Proceeding 40 or 50 miles more eastwardly, we meet with the first Chinese settlement of Chin-käng.

We have now arrived at the banks of the Loo-keang, which is even here a very considerable stream. If the accounts of Chinese geographers be correct, it takes its rise in Kokonor, the land of springs and fountains, in the 32nd degree of N. lat., and receives many other rivers before it reaches the Birman frontier. It is there known under the name of 'I hau-leuen, and having traversed that country through its whole length, it falls, known as the river Saluen, below the town of Martaban into the sea. Already in the Laos territory it is a broad and deep stream, not inferior to the Kew-lung in size, and navigable by rafts and long boats. In Yunnan it likewise forms a stream of some importance, and is navigated by native boats. After having passed through Koshanpri its character entirely changes, and it becomes a sluggish stream, full of banks and shallows. The tide runs up 100 English miles, and vessels of small draught may ascend about 70. It skirts throughout the whole course a ridge of mountains, extending from Yunnan and ending in about the 8° 20' lat. A great part of the course of the river lies through a frightful wilderness, and scenes of natural grandeur scarcely equalled in any part of Asia. The mountains, covered with trees of immense height, give to its banks a dark and sombre hue, and the underwood affords shelter to the royal tiger and other beasts of prey. On entering Yunnan the valley of the river widens, and affords room for human habitations, and even here and there a town.

The first place on approaching the Laos territory is Yung-chong, a town rendered noted by late tragical events. The greater part of the inhabitants, especially in the Paou-shan district, are Mohammedans, who, having offended some other sects in the neighbourhood, the latter laid siege to the villages of the former, burnt a number of their houses, and exacted a heavy ransom for their lives. The impunity with which this was done encouraged the victors subsequently to a repetition of similar outrages. They again invaded their territory, and, to justify their proceedings, gave out that the Mohammedans were in a state of rebellion. This assertion was supported by Chinese troops, who appeared to put down the supposed insurrection. Instead, however, of investigating the matter, the commanding officer promised a perfect amnesty, if the Mohammedans would surrender their arms. This having been done, the soldiers penetrated during the night into the city, and murdered nearly ten thousand of the inhabitants. Many families fled to the Birmah territory, and others died of starvation in the mountains. The Chinese commander reported that he had gained a splendid victory, and was in consequence raised to high honours. All the officers were recompensed for their efforts in quelling the rebellion. Subsequently to this destruction of life and property in this formerly flourishing region, an intelligent Mohammedan proceeded, in 1847, directly to Peking, there giving a true statement of the course of events, when the Emperor immediately ordered an investigation to take place, which will very likely result to the advantage of the sufferers, and ensure this persecuted sect the re-possession of their former property.

From the Loo-keang the Chinese Laos frontier extends two degrees west, through a richly watered country abounding in verdant fields, and a large population. Through this territory alone the communication with the peninsula is practicable, for in all other parts the mountain ranges present impenetrable obstacles. Immediately to the north of the Loo-keang we find the Chay-fang territory, a small fertile spot, washed on the north by the Che river, one of the feeders of the Lung-chuen: the latter empties itself, in the Birmah territory at Katha, into the Irawaddy, and is a considerable stream, having, before leaving the Chinese frontier, received the Kang-wan river. Between these two there is a small state called Maow, containing many extensive valleys, the population of which is wholly agricultural.

We have then to traverse the Sà-sa state, having in the north the Haé-pih river, which falls, at the celebrated city Bamoo, into the Irawaddy. This country is towards the west

hilly, but exhibits in the opposite direction a long plain, through which passes the great thoroughfare towards the south.

We now come to those regions unknown even to Chinese traders, and which are entirely under native chiefs, who acknowledge no authority but their own, and defy the whole power of the mandarins. These tribes are, without doubt, of Tartar origin, having nothing in common with the Laos, either in religion or language.

The Laos state most to the north is Chantat, a country richly watered by the Chin-tung-to, the Tă-ho, and the Pin-lung-ho or Betelnut rivers, which, running north, fall into the Hae-pih. In the 26th degree of N. lat. the habitations of the Laos cease, and wilder tribes, resembling the Tibetans, occupy the mountains of the country. Although Birman maps extend their dominion to the 27th degree of lat., and over three to four degrees of longitude (95° - 99°), this portion may truly be called a debateable ground. Even the Chinese government has never asserted any right over this people, and the mandarins know them only by the name of Kew or Noo.

Farther westward we again meet a land of rivers and of fertile valleys. The Mun-tsoo river flows in a southerly direction, the Lo-tsoo, more to the west, runs nearly parallel, and both uniting near the frontiers form the Chō-to-mūh-tsoo river, which besides receives a branch from the west—the Chă-tsoo. Along the banks of each river run chains of mountains. Nothing is known concerning the course of this river after entering the debateable ground of the Birman territory, but it is supposed to be one of the principal feeders of the Irawaddy.

The course of the Pō-tsang-poo and of the Ya-lo-tsang-poo (Tsan-poo), both of which enter the western extremity of the Birman frontier, is equally unknown. Both are large rivers, the former flowing south receives in Tibet many tributary streams, while the latter runs south-east, and, on reaching the frontier, south. These rivers form perhaps by their junction the Shan-la-wade, or the Kia-yu-dua-pu of the Birmans, which is the principal tributary of the Irawaddy. To suppose for a moment that they are lost in the Birman country would be in defiance of reason, and the sources of the Irawaddy have been traced about 50 miles north of a principal Borkhamti village, in the $27^{\circ} 30'$, N.E. of the Brahmaputra. Here we must leave the subject until the frightful mountains of Tibet and Kokonor have been traversed, and the course of the rivers more scientifically investigated.

The inhabitants of this part of the country belong to the mixed population of Kokonor, represented to be the descendants of the Monguls, and quite a different race from the

Laos. They are brave and fond of war, but superstitious believers in Lamanism. Under this scourge they honour their spiritual guides as the incarnation of Budha, obey them in all things, and consider no sacrifice too great to satisfy their desires or conciliate their good will. The most absurd laws enacted at L'hassa are here considered sacred. The Chinese government, well aware of the impossibility of conquering this country by means of physical force, has made superstition the engine for obtaining power, and homage to Budha and implicit obedience to Chinese power have become here identical.

Considering the fertility of the valleys, the agriculture of these tribes is at a very low point, and much excellent land is uncultivated. The dresses of the people are homespun, and made of the coarsest materials; but the richer classes indulge in Chinese silk, and the clergy make use of the best safron-coloured satins. While the houses of the inhabitants are mere hovels, the monasteries and pagodas are carefully built.

Of the Birman frontier our knowledge is very scanty. The eastern part is the best inhabited and cultivated, but the people are subject to grinding oppression on the part of the Birman government. Many of these Laos visit the fair at Rangoon, though forty days' distant, with the productions of their country. They export lac, varnish, ground-nuts, lead, gold and silver in ingots. Iron is found in large quantities. The Laos have lately opened an intercourse with Martaban, and will probably, on finding security of person and property, come to that market in greater numbers for the manufactures of Europe.

The most celebrated place to the south-west of Yun-nan is Bamoo, the grand emporium between Birmah and China. It lies in lat. $24^{\circ} 9'$, long. $96^{\circ} 45'$, on the Irawaddy, at its junction with the Haé-pih. The inhabitants are principally Laos, but the principal merchants are Chinese, with an intermixture of Birmans. Cotton, ivory, betel-nut, birds' nests, &c., form the principal imports into China, in exchange for manufactured goods, teas, paper, &c. Hundreds of merchants from Yun-nan assemble at this place, and many visit even Amerapoora towards the arrival of the caravan. Cotton is the great article of demand. The Chinese bring their goods over the mountains on ponies. The communication seems to be easy, and the risks of a long land transportation comparatively trifling. This route is the only practicable one into China in this quarter, and was known to the Monguls at a very early period. Keénlung, a successful monarch of the last century, heard with envy of the treasures of the far south. Victorious in the north-west, he had subjugated the sturdy Turkomans

and Eluths, and naturally concluded that the feeble natives of Birmah would not be able to resist his invincible forces.

The cabinet at Peking waited but an opportunity to commence the war, and one soon offered. A Chinese merchant, by the erection of a bridge, roused the suspicions of the Birman authorities, who accused him of evil designs, and deprived him of a great part of his property. He applied to his government for redress, and received the assurance that he should be satisfied to the utmost of his wishes, although the government of China as a rule pay no attention to the claims of native merchants upon foreigners beyond their frontiers. When, viz. in the last century, thousands of Chinese were murdered by the Dutch at Batavia, the only remark made was, "that Government could not interfere in behalf of men who had abandoned the graves of their ancestors." On a similar occasion, when several hundred Chinese, in 1833, engaged in cultivating tea in Java, were said to have been surrounded and cut down by the Dutch, no notice whatever was taken of this matter, although it was animadverted upon in the strongest terms by the people in the neighbourhood of Macao. In the Birmah case, however, the silver-mines (the value of which had been much over-rated) acted as a great inducement for interference.

The case of the above-mentioned merchant was still pending, when a Chinese caravan, in a quarrel with the natives, lost one of its number. They asked for redress, and hush-money was offered them according to Birman custom, but refused, and a Chinese army appeared on the northern banks of the Haé-pih to support the demand for redress. Several Laos chiefs who had fled from Birman oppression were in the Chinese camp, and tendered their allegiance to the Celestial Empire. Bamoo was delivered up to the invaders without a blow, and the army having crossed the river, the governor of Kaung-toun (no doubt a Shan) went over to the enemy in 1765, but the city itself held out.

Instead now of boldly advancing into the country, the Chinese troops halted before this town, while their General, Yin, sent a boastful account of his victory to Peking, thus affording time to Shin-bu-yen, the warlike monarch of Birmah, to dispatch a considerable army to the defence of the frontiers. Ere, however, the Birman army could reach its destination, the Chinese force had been already thinned by the desertion of the Laos auxiliaries, by disease, and by hunger. Having sustained but one attack from the Birmans, the Chinese retreated, and only a small remnant succeeded in reaching the banks of the Kew-lung.

But Keënlung was a prince of a firm determination. Aware that the Birmans, in 1767, engaged in a war with Siam, were besieging the capital of that country, he ordered an experienced general again to march upon Bamoo with an immense army, whilst another corps traversed the frontiers to the north, near the Tsanta river. But a large reinforcement was sent by the Birmans up the Irawaddy to the relief of Kaung-toun, a second time besieged by the Chinese. Akwei, the general-in-chief of the latter, was considered the greatest of the Chinese commanders. Assisted by several Laos princes, he penetrated far into the country, until at length the army became entangled in the jungle, and suffered extreme hardships. Epidemic diseases made their appearance in the camp, and thousands were carried off, whilst the Birman forces, being constantly recruited, grew bolder every day. A most disastrous retreat then followed, and the whole road and forests, through which the Chinese retired, were covered with the dying and the dead. Under such circumstances the chiefs of the Chinese (amongst whom was an imperial prince) made proposals for peace. This was agreed to in December, 1769, and they were permitted to retreat with the remains of the army. The ancient frontiers were thus retained, the former relations re-established, and the Laos tribes returned to the Birman sway. In 1787 a Chinese embassy arrived in Birmah, and both countries recommenced their former political intercourse. The ambitious hopes entertained by Keënlung of laying a firm foundation of his power in the south, and of extending his dominions to Hindostan, were thus finally frustrated.
